

## INTRODUCTION

**Leonor Scliar-Cabral**

As a result of a symposium of the **AILA Scientific Commission on Psycholinguistics**, called Studies on Unity and Diversity in Communication (Organizers: Leonor Scliar-Cabral and Tatiana Slama-Cazacu), which took place on August 6, 1999, from 10:10 to 12:10, at the University of Waseda, B. 101, bl.14, Tokyo, we present this special issue, a collection of all delivered papers. In addition, some known scholars were invited to enrich this edition.

The authors who participated at the symposium were H. Dechert, former professor, belonging to the University of Kassel (Germany); V. Leffa, then president of the Brazilian Society of Applied Linguistics (Catholic University of Pelotas, Brazil); J.L. Meurer, belonging to the Graduate Course on English Language and Literature of the Federal University of Santa Catarina (Brazil); J. M. Poersch (Pontifical Catholic University, RS) and one of the organizers of the Symposium, Leonor Scliar-Cabral (Federal University of Santa Catarina and Brazilian National Council for Research, CNPq). The invited scholars are Annick De Houwer, Associate Professor of Communication at the University of Antwerp in Belgium; Esther Dromi and Anat Blass, from the School of Education Humanities Department, Tel-Aviv University; Francisco

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Gomes de Matos, Professor at the Federal University of Pernambuco and Maria da Graça Pinto, Professor at the University of Porto.

The psycholinguistic approach on unity and diversity in communication was the focus of the symposium. Thus, in this issue, among other things, the authors examine and discuss processes undergone by receivers and producers of messages which, despite the varieties determined either by social or individual factors such as geographical, socioeconomic, educational, age or sex, or by the specific history of each participant of discourse, or by the situation and social use are communicable (or not) with efficient results.

### **Integration of biological and cognitive levels**

In his paper "Unity and Diversity: The Williams Subjects' Message", H. W. Dechert attempts to approach the conference's main topic UNITY AND DIVERSITY from a psycholinguistic perspective. He focuses on the uneven profile of cognitive-linguistic abilities and deficits, caused by a genetic micro-deletion on chromosome 7 among Williams Syndrome Subjects (WSS). The author discusses the topic Unity-Diversity "as being reflected through the application of certain mental metaphors concerning psycholinguistic phenomena".

WSS show severe deficits in various visuo-spatial tasks, and at the same time a highly developed ability to recognize faces and objects in canonical and uncanonical perspectives.

Although they are known for their highly developed verbal competence in ordinary discourse and narration and metalinguistic cognition, recently French WSS have revealed deficits in gender attribution and gender agreement, a linguistic mini-domain irrelevant for speakers of English. Dechert concludes that there is dissociation between cognition and language, within the language module and between various mini-domains within the language module.

These dissociations provide the framework for the explanation of the enormous complexity of the unity and diversity of the human mind in solving particular tasks in general.

Dechert's paper is a contribution for our current understanding of the genetic bases for disorders and its implications debating unity and diversity in communication.

### **Correlation between comprehension and pleasure in reading**

The correlation to be found between the ability to understand a text and the pleasure in the reading of the same text is Leffa's proposal. To test his hypotheses, 67 students from 5<sup>th</sup> grade to university level were asked to read a text loaded with both cognitive and affective content, written by a famous journalist. After reading it, students had to answer a comprehension/reaction questionnaire.

Leffa defines the categories of comprehension and pleasure, using a spatial and temporal metaphor: "comprehension is related to the syntagmatic dimension of the text, horizontal in nature, where what is said in one place relates to what is said in another place, inside or outside the text. Pleasure, on the other hand, is seen as the reader's reaction to the text, in a temporal dimension, related to what has happened before and to what may still happen in the future, based on the expectations raised by reader's contact with the text." The last category is grounded in literary criticism, namely the receptive theory of literature. Observe that Leffa's approach to comprehension agrees with Meurer's definition of clause relation.

Results were not so transparent, due to the difficulty of measuring pleasure, although the author used among others an objective indicator such as the subjects' reactions to figures of speech. Nevertheless data analysis allowed interesting reflections. For instance, comprehension competence develops from the first grades to university level as showed by the high correlation index between grade level and correction of prediction ( $r = -.98$ ); on the other hand, only on the university level the majority of the subjects (more than 50%) went beyond the information provided by the text. What is surprising is the author's conclusion that the vast majority of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade students did not understand the text.

Leffa concludes that there is a correlation between comprehension and pleasure in reading, as far as subjective data are not biasing the results. In addition, topic interest positively influences reading enjoyment.

### **Genre as diversity and rhetorical mode as unity in language use**

In his article, Meurer clarifies the notions of rhetorical mode and genre and suggests that rhetorical modes can be incorporated as a tool in the analysis of genres. Empirical data for illustrating the differences between genre and rhetorical mode are taken from an analysis of clause relations in one of Aesop's fables.

Starting from Bakhtin's conception of genre as relatively stable types of utterances, the author refers to the new rhetoric tradition where the definition of genre is centered on action, in opposition to the ESP frame which envisages text types by their formal properties as well as by their communicative purposes within social contexts. Regarding SFL, he considers determinants such as the context of culture and Field, Tenor and Mode in the context of situation, which shape the register of different genres. Meurer defines rhetorical modes "as textual strategies, differently clustering in different genres, which are utilized by writers as a means to textualize specific parts and functions of their texts". In this case, the author emphasizes the architectural organization texts show.

Giving a contribution to the Symposium debate, Meurer asserts that the spread of a given rhetorical mode into many genres may foreground the notion of unity versus diversity in language use. He illustrates his thesis, examining three aspects of clause relations in Aesop's fable: the Basic Text Structure known as Situation-Evaluation and the Basic Clause Relations referred to as Matching Compatibility and Matching Incompatibility.

In conclusion, while "genres stand for variety, associated to as many different possibilities of language use as the related social

practices, rhetorical modes may stand for unity because they constitute a limited number of linguistic patterns which allow for the production of an infinite number of genres”.

### Unity and diversity in translating activities

The fourth paper “How can unity of content be obtained from the diversity of expression: From symbolism to connectionism” presented by Poersch, as the title suggests, deals with quite a different approach.

The author contrasts (new words labeled in the article) “**staticity** of mental representations (symbols) and the **seriality** of the information process (classical artificial intelligence) – with which the symbolic paradigm explains the cognitive processes of the reading process in our mind clearly” with “the **flexibility** – characterized by the use of dynamic ad hoc configurations obtained by means of **parallel distributed information** among the inter-neural connections – with which the connectionist paradigm tries to explain the sequence of processes (hidden units in our brain) interpolated between input and output data”.

Starting from Hjelmslev’s dichotomy of content and expression, Poersch affirms that every reader reads the same text in different ways, according with the connectionist explanation, i. e. , that the processing of knowledge takes place as synaptic changes between neurons. The author demonstrates his assertions with translating activities, where the translator mediates the processes between the writer of the source text and the reader of the target text.

Poersch’s hypotheses are that the overall performance in reading and writing positively correlates with the quality of translation and that the performance in reading and writing is differently related to the quality of translation, leading to the assumption that one ability exerts a stronger influence than the other. He considers the factors quality of translation, the reading comprehension in the source language and the writing performance in the target language .

In this paper, diversity may be viewed as the different texts built by writer, translator and final readers, while unity may be conceived as the meaning, “which goes far beyond the explicit and implicit meaning”, which Poersch calls **ultraplicit** meaning, “situated far beyond what is clearly stated in the text or what is written between its line”.

### **Globalization and linguistic ghettos**

Scliar-Cabral considers some aspects of contemporary communication regarding unity and diversity, namely, on the one hand, globalization provided by mass media, particularly by Internet and on line electronic mail. She scrutinizes them altogether with their psycholinguistic consequences: What are the differences that appear in human processing and how is the logical distinction between unity and diversity faced? How deep are the changes experienced by children, who are acquiring and learning their oral and written languages, using such media?

On the other hand, despite globalization, the geometrical growth of science and technology carries together a parallel lexical explosion: specific texts undermine the possibility of their comprehension by the outsider as if the text was written in a foreign language, and so, the unity of communication is broken and distortions may appear. See, e.g., the overuse of foreign or technical words in one language or in another. Such pitfall is also deepened by the fact that there is still a large number of people who are illiterate (according to the Section of Statistics on Education, Division of Statistics, of UNESCO, the estimated population of illiterates will have reached 935 million by the end of the century: these data show the enormous distance between those who have access to written information and those who have not).

Such discussion and debates about unity and diversity in communication from a psycholinguistic perspective may also help the proposal of local linguistic policies and educational ones to overcome various problems, which are submitted for reflection.

### **Can metaphors be translated?**

Hanna Jakubowicz Batoréo in her article, "There is only a thin red line between the sane and the mad": mind, culture, language and metaphor - interactions between imagination, visual perception and cognition, discusses the intriguing question of translating metaphors. She presents data from three languages: European Portuguese, English and Polish, focusing mostly the interactions between imagination, visual perception and cognition, using filmic verbal and non verbal examples and compares given figurative solutions. Empirical data are extracted from Terrence Malick's film The thin red line, based on James Jones' novel (same title): the American original version, the transcript of the Polish voiceover and the transcript of the European Portuguese subtitling are scrutinized. With a lot of sense of humor, Batoréo ends her article asking: "Do you still believe that a wafer is not a biscuit?"

### **Comparison between monolingual and bilingual acquisition**

Among the most interesting topics for discussing unity and diversity in communication, bilingual acquisition certainly deserves a central place. Annick De Houwer, nowadays considered one of the top specialists in this field, presents and discusses an overview of studies on young children who together are acquiring 13 languages in 14 different combinations. The author inquiry is how different are monolingual and bilingual acquisition and her conclusion, agreeing with Slobin, is that there is no fundamental difference between monolingual and bilingual acquisition, although when Slobin made this assumption in 1973 he was not based on empirical evidence, which is not the case in De Houwer's article.

### **Are verbal morphological abilities the same comparing normally developing children with those with SLI?**

In their study, comparing the spontaneous use of verbal forms between normally developing children and those with SLI, Esther Dromi and Anat Blass, from Tel Aviv University, found a very similar behavior. They accompanied 15 HSLI children who were previously diagnosed as children with SLI and were enrolled in intensive language preschool programs, aged 4;2 to 6;1 and a matched comparison group of normal children, aged 2;8 to 3;11. The factor for matching both groups was their MLUs in words and MPUs in morphemes. Data were taken from their spontaneous language samples, while they were engaged in playing or in a conversation with an experienced experimenter in a quiet room in the preschool. The authors attribute the inexistence of differences between the studied groups mostly to methodological factors, namely to the fact that data were collected from spontaneous speech. They conclude that “in naturalistic conversations children may simply avoid verb forms that require too much processing”.

### **Diversity: an annotated interdisciplinary bibliography**

Gomes de Matos' contribution to this issue represents a remarkable help to those who wish to deepen their knowledge about the issue on diversity. His main purpose is the listing of key-concepts-terms, among which the occurrence of **diversity** is found, for evidencing how general ideas are shared by educational, scientific and cultural domains. Gomes de Matos begins his exposition with the first appearance of the stem 'divers', to which the semantic field of diversity belongs. The adjective 'divers' was firstly documented lexicographically in 1200. In addition, the author classifies the various uses of 'diversity', following ten annotated entries selected from published works since 1995. The classification includes the following ten areas: Linguistic rights, cross cultural studies, psychology, education, discourse analysis, peace

education, sociology, second language acquisition, anthropological linguistics and applied linguistics.

### **Two forces waiting to converge**

Examining the Internet as a global medium, the network culture, the instruments of regulation in a harmonious global society, e-writing, Netspeak, implications of multi-form Internet representations, computer-based learning and the role of the teacher in this setting, under the head-lines of unity and diversity, Prof. Maria da Graça Pinto confronts the following question: should the access to knowledge served by the Information and Communication Technologies not be compatible with any kind of “technological/knowledge divide”?

After approaching the phenomenon of “globalisation” and the notion of “communication” and the above topics, Pinto’s final remarks are that ‘interplay of the antagonist forces inherent to the terms “unity” and “diversity” connected to processes, such as communication, in which the protagonists are, on the one hand, the creativity of the *homo loquens* and, on the other hand, the unpredictable advances of the new information and communication technologies, will always have to take into account a “open space continuum”’.